

2002-Eckhart Tolle Entering the Now 2 Audio CD

[Speaker 2] (0:11 - 0:18)

Sounds True and Namaste Publishing present Entering the Now with Eckhart Tolle.

[Speaker 1] (0:40 - 1:00:04)

Welcome to our retreat. I trust everybody can hear me. I also trust that nobody is waiting for me to start, because everybody here knows that we are here to give up waiting as a state of mind, normal state of mind, and that there's another state of mind, or rather no mind, in which you're not waiting for the next moment.

That's why we're here, to discover that state of no mind, awareness, you could call it, or deepen it. We are not here to add anything to what we know. We know enough, enough to have come here.

So we are here to discover that thinking is not the only possible state for humans, and not the highest state. And as we go through the shift from thinking to awareness, thinking, first of all, loses its predominant place in our lives. And as a side product of losing its predominant place in our lives, it actually becomes more effective.

Thinking becomes more effective, less destructive, not destructive anymore. So no answer here is going to come if you're looking for the answer on the level of thinking, or on the level of adding something to your mind. The answer lies in stepping beyond thinking, simply by allowing what is, which is now, allowing what is to be as it is, because it is.

And you discover that the compulsion to think is to a large extent connected with not being willing to allow what is to be as it is now, because there's a little mind-made entity, consists of thinking and accumulated thought patterns, that thrives on resistance to what is, and on reactivity, and is always looking for the next thing to get a little bit bigger. It's never quite enough. This little me is never quite enough.

Most of you have come here because there is at work within you something that goes far beyond the personal, something that is an expression of the evolutionary impulse of the universe. On the surface level, it looks as if a person had chosen to come here. But it is also possible that one or two have come here expecting something they're not going to get.

What's that? More. More experiences, more knowledge, more beliefs, more opinions.

So if there are one or two who have come here expecting more, then they might want to leave. As soon as they discover there's no more. Or they suddenly, after, if they can endure the discomfort that arises when the need for more is not met, and don't run away

immediately, they can endure the discomfort, they may be able to break through that mind pattern.

Please pay attention, not just to the words, but to the silent spaces between the words. That's where the shift happens. In that alertness that is required to acknowledge or to listen to that dimension of stillness that underlies the words and is in between the words.

That is why we're here. And that's not an adding to, because that is discovering something that's already there but had been ignored. Just as I was coming here this beautiful night, in this incredibly beautiful place, I took off my shoes and I looked up at the sky.

A clear sky, stars, brilliant points of light. And there is something when you look up there, there's something that is so easily overlooked, but should be obvious to anybody who looks up there. It can tell you something about the nature of the universe.

When you look up, what do you see? You see little points of light, you see, basically, there are two dimensions there. Objects, celestial objects, suns, planets, the moon, galaxies, billions, trillions.

So there are celestial objects, things, objects in space, and there's space. The universe consists of things. You can look, it's so obvious.

There are things in space and there's the vastness of space. The things are that which is manifested. But when you look up, what produces the feeling of awe, of the feeling of infinity, is the vastness of space.

The depths of it, which is inconceivable, has no end. It is such that even our neighboring galaxy, our next door neighbor in terms of galactic neighbors, the Andromeda galaxy, if you traveled at the speed of light, which is very fast, 300,000 kilometers per second, which is the distance from here to the moon in one second, is the speed of light. If you traveled at the speed of light to our neighboring galaxy, and there are billions of galaxies, the closest one to us, it would take you 2.3 million years to reach it. At the speed of light, 2.3 million years. Such is the depth, the vastness of space. And what is out there applies also, the so-called external universe, applies also to the so-called inner universe.

There is also within you things, let's keep it simple, things and space in your life. Now, things, it is obvious that your life is surrounded by things. There are many things in your life, physical things.

In many people's lives, there are so many physical things to deal with that they are constantly running after the next physical thing that they need to deal with. They may have a house, they may have this and this, and everything demands attention. Their entire attention is absorbed by the things that surround them.

And it's just at the moment, just talking about physical things. This is needed, and that's needed, and that. And then there's the belief that there are not enough physical things yet.

I need some more, because I don't feel quite complete yet. And then there are other things in a wider sense, all the things that make up your life situation, conditions of your life, events. Things are constantly happening, and constantly new things pop up.

Oh, thanks. So it's not just physical things. All kinds of things make up your life situation, what people call my life.

But I say it's only your life situation. They don't know what their life is. Their life situation consists of an accumulation of events, things happening, situations, demanding attention.

Everything saying, this is important, give me attention. So there's the pull of things, not just physical things, the pull of situations, of demanding. So it's the world, your world, consisting of things that need to be dealt with.

And it's never quite enough time to deal with it all. And when you've dealt with one thing here, there are three more things cropped up there. And so people go through life with that pull into the world of things.

It doesn't leave you alone for long. And on a primordial level, on a basic primordial level, all the world of things starts with thoughts. Because all the things, whether they are physical, or events, or situations in your life, really only exist in you as thought.

Nobody knows whether actually there's anything out there at all. Because what reaches you, they say, sense perception happens, visual, auditory, and so on, is translated into nerve impulses that reach the brain. And those impulses are decoded.

And then some kind of world picture emerges. Oh, this is what's going on. Nobody actually knows what's out there beyond the impulses that are being received and decoded.

And so some kind of world picture is put together. So that some philosophers have even doubted that there's anything out there at all. And it could just be a dream.

And there are certain indications that it is a dream. It's in the nature of dreams to be fleeting, to evaporate very quickly. It's in the nature of situations in your life, whatever condition, any situation, everything is fairly fleeting.

It's there. One moment, it has gone the next. Where was yesterday?

What happened yesterday? When you first wake up in the morning, you might think, was it a dream, or did it happen? And then you meet some other people who agree that it did

happen.

But it could be that these other people are part of your dream. So all the things that seem to be out there, the world of things, is really an inner phenomenon. It's to do with mind.

It's to do with thought. We don't need to take any position here. We don't need to say, yes, the external world exists, or no, the external world does not exist.

But very often, the answer is both or neither. The answer is not yes or no. From one perspective, it's yes.

From another perspective, no. So most people's life is filled up with things, which on the most basic level means thoughts, mind movement. One could say objects that appear in your consciousness, one after the other.

And sometimes they are battling for one thought, another thought. So people's lives are crammed full with that mind stuff. And you can see it in people's faces, the way they lead their lives, the way they interact with others.

What you can see is very often the absence of space. Well, it can't be absent, but they don't know it's there anymore. All they know is things that appear.

The any sense of space is gone. And so they experience their life as a continuous stream of, I'm quoting Churchill again, as I love to do, who defined history as one damn thing after another. And if you ask many people about their personal lives, they might give you the same answer.

How's your life been up to this point? One damn thing after another. And the next damn thing comes just in the moment when you thought, now you've made it.

Success at last, recognition. Everybody loves me. And then everybody wants something from you.

Now, fortunately, I have nothing to give on the level of things, although sometimes people demand things. That's not what I have to give. And no spiritual teacher has to give things.

No true spiritual teacher is here to give you things, anything on the level of, but simply to show you the possibility of living not obsessed with things. And I'm using that now in a wider sense. I don't just mean obsessed with physical things.

It's a tiny aspect of it. Obsessed with things also means possessed by things, and it means possessed by thought. Totally in the grip of thought.

One after another, and after another, and another, and another. And to derive your

entire sense of identity from that stream of one damn thing after another. Me.

There's a me in every thought. There's a me in every emotion, in every reaction. There's a sense of me.

And my relationship to the world is a me against the rest of the world. That's the battle I have to fight. Defending me, completing me, and looking out for more things, either to defend myself against or to accumulate, to take on this part of me.

So to show the spiritual teacher is here, and the spiritual teacher is not separate from you. This event here is happening in your consciousness. You don't know that I'm actually here.

Outside of your consciousness, I'm in you. So that voice that you hear is arising within you. Of course it is.

There may be nothing out here. It could all be an illusion, but the voice is there. It's arising in you.

And so it's pointing to the possibility of living in a different way. A life that is not a burden and a continuous seeking and continuous conflict. The possibility of being aware of inner space.

In which, yes, in which the world of things still happens. In which, yes, thought still happens. And yet to be aware of a dimension of consciousness that we could call space consciousness.

Because as we saw, and as you can verify when you look up into the sky tonight, there's objects out there and there's space. That's basically what the world consists of. And the two dimensions are within you.

And humans have become lost in one. So we are here to realize that dimension. And I'm not saying you are going to realize it.

It cannot be realized in the future. It cannot be made into an object of a search. Because it's here now.

The moment you're looking for it, you create a future. Now what is future? It's a thought form.

Apart from that there is no future except as a thought form. It cannot come except as now. So it's now the arising of space consciousness or the realization of space consciousness is here now.

For example, it happens when you acknowledge not only the words that you hear. Acknowledge simply means pay attention. Notice.

Easy. It is not a big thing. Just notice.

Just as noticing here there are two dimensions, just the same as when you look up into the sky at night, you will find there are two dimensions. There are the words here and there's a silent space or stillness in which the words happen. There are gaps in the words occasionally, little gaps.

And even as the words are spoken, there's an underlying still, silent space. The simple act of noticing that, that's all that's needed for space consciousness to be present in you. And you cannot grasp it and say, now I have it.

Because it becomes an object again. It's an underlying field. So simply, the simple awareness of the spaces is space consciousness.

And you notice it's still and it doesn't involve thinking. It is a short interval of not thinking. When you notice a silent space, just noticing it.

It is not through thought that you noticed it. It is possible that after a second later, thought comes in and says, oh, there was a silent space. But then you're not noticing it anymore.

It becomes a memory. It becomes a thought. And it becomes, it's transformed by thought into an object.

So this is very simple. This is something to practice. And even practice isn't the right word.

It's too simple to say practice. It's a way of being aware of two dimensions. Manifested, unmanifested.

And if you can move through life, being aware of the two, not losing touch with space consciousness, then life, even the life of things, things, even the manifested life, becomes quite pleasant. Not that you can totally escape from the polarities that are inherent, the polar opposites of the universe, the manifested universe, which means a thing that makes you happy today can easily turn around and make you unhappy tomorrow. And that which makes you unhappy today can turn around and you suddenly see, oh, it's led to something great.

The other polarity came. And any situation you go into in this world, which is the world of things, will have one side to it, an upside and a downside. Anybody who has made it in the eyes of the world knows that making it has a downside, considerable downside.

Or you make it and then you lose it. But that is no longer the source of suffering as it is when you only know the world of things. You have an expectation from everything, every situation, every person in your life.

You have certain expectations, which deep down, if you look at it, is saying, complete me, give me what I need, make me happy. And then it doesn't. Nothing, no thing in this world can do that.

Thing in a wider sense, no situation, no person, no condition can make you feel complete. As long as your entire sense of identity is trapped in object consciousness, me, my story, what can I add to it to make it more complete, to complete me? You can temporarily add things that feel great.

I have achieved, I'm now the greatest this or that. And then you see it doesn't take long before you experience the downside of being the greatest this or that. And even a deeply spiritual person like Einstein, he didn't walk around thinking, I'm the greatest.

People had this projection. They said, you are the greatest genius that ever lived. And he said, this is very strange what people, the opinion that people have of me.

I didn't really, and he felt his life wasn't complete. He had missed the most important thing. He couldn't quite up with the final answer, whatever he called it.

I can't remember. Unified field theory to explain the entire universe. Here it is.

But Einstein was a rare phenomenon. He had breakthroughs into space consciousness. And that's where he's the realization that did come to him, came from as all creative thought comes to those who, even if only for short moments, can break through into space consciousness, into stillness, into that empty space, the inner space, which empty is a misleading word.

It's intelligence itself. So we are here for that to arise within. Because the world can't go on in its deluded state, it's lopsided, unbalanced state for much longer.

It would simply self destruct. And then that's fine. Space is fine.

You can't do anything to it, no matter how mad the world is. And mad means only knowing one dimension, not knowing the other dimension. That's all.

And so it begins as we sit here, being aware of spacious stillness and the words. Then you're not looking for the next word. Because you're rooted in something that's deeper than object consciousness.

And the words don't come from accumulated knowledge. They actually come out of space consciousness. It's almost as if space consciousness were saying, come home.

Because the essence of your being is that. What Buddhists call emptiness, or what Hindus call the self, not the little self, the one self, the kingdom of heaven. They all point to that.

Nothing else matters here. Thought, whatever thoughts come into your head while you're here, are not that important. They will want to be important.

This is, you need to ask this question now. Ask this question. Ask, ask.

And I'm not saying don't ask. There will be questions. But many questions start with, have a compulsive quality, which is the importance of this mental position.

And they may start with, yes, but, so what are you saying? I mean, I still don't understand what you mean by space consciousness. Of course not.

Do you think I understand it? As the Zen master said to his disciple, do you understand Zen? And the disciple, no master.

And master says, neither do I. Now, many understandings arise out of that state of connectedness with that unmanifested dimension. But you cannot understand that dimension in itself.

It would be absurd. It trying to understand the unmanifested. The manifested, which is a tiny temporary form, trying to understand the vastness of the infinite.

Of course, but many realizations, understandings, insights arise out of the state of connectedness, yes. But in itself, you will always remain totally ignorant of that in itself. It cannot be known whatsoever as you know an object in consciousness.

It cannot be known because it is the essence of all knowing. You can't make it into an object. And so that is the strange thing then is what appears is that state of connectedness with that unmanifested dimension appears to the human mind, to object consciousness, it appears as a state of ignorance, as it appears as a state of not knowing anything anymore.

And yet, that is not the case. You cannot know that state. But as you enter that state, all language, by the way, arises, is derived from object consciousness and is itself object consciousness.

Therefore, whatever we say, when we point to the unmanifested, already contains an error built into it. Because it contains a limitation. And all language and all thought does that.

That's why the great sage Lao Tse, who wrote the beautiful and profound, one of the most profound books, the Tao Te Ching, the first line, the Tao that can be spoken of is not the true Tao. Of course not. Or if you want to find a modern translation, if you can't talk about it, that's not it.

But knowing that, it's fine to talk about it. And that's why Lao Tse continued writing the book when he said you can't talk about it. But once it's been pointed out, then you don't

mistake the words for it and you find some little contradiction in the words.

Of course there's contradiction in the words the moment they point to the unmanifested. So you have to look beyond that. And so this is only one way, in many ways, as we spend our retreat here, in many ways the dimension of the unmanifested, which we could call the divine, which we could call God.

I don't use that very often because the moment you say God, you have an object in consciousness, a concept. A little bit better, a little bit less confining would be to say the infinite. God is a closed concept.

It's God is here, I'm here, God is here, and the table is there. The infinite doesn't have clear boundaries around it. Where does it begin and start?

And you can't claim possession of it so easily. You can say my God and your God, but my infinite and your infinite doesn't work. So when you use a different term, you can see how absurd it is to say my God and your God.

So in many ways, that dimension, the infinite, arises here. And this is only one way that I suggest. Pay attention, not just to the words, but to the underlying field.

Notice it. And as you go into nature, that is another way, and we will be going into that again in more detail. Also there, you can be aware, I don't know if you noticed when you first arrive here, maybe when you get out of the car, or I came on this little seaplane, and the moment the engine stops, and it comes in, and your pilot opens the little door, it's so still here.

Of course, there are a few noises, birds and occasionally some human noise, but not often. And little noises here and there, water splashing, insects buzzing. But mostly, it's so still, so still.

And that's why it's very helpful to be in a place like this, where on a simple auditory level, you're not bombarded with things, noisy things. And so it's so easy here to be aware of that vast stillness, to simply notice it. And certain people who are totally trapped in mind, when they are in stillness, they are looking for some kind of noise to interpret through their mind.

And if they can catch a bird and then say something about it, they feel very lucky. Ah, there it is, I'm not dismissing all knowledge. But here, we don't need it.

There may be a place for that kind of thing. But here, you can notice, if you're totally trapped in mind, you're looking for some, the stillness would be unbearable almost, and you would want to try and ignore it, and look for some noise that you can have a relationship with, or interpret, or talk about, or think about, or compare, or classify. And some so-called nature lovers, who know a lot about insects, and birds, and flowers, they

miss.

If they cannot free themselves from their knowledge and enter the state of not knowing, at least temporarily, just least, then they don't know that. So here, the wonderful opportunity is simply to notice that dimension. And it is, I can't say it often enough, the simple fact of noticing is enough for that to arise, because that is the arising of it.

And in that moment of noticing that field of stillness, there is no movement of thought in that moment. And I am certain that in many of you, in your ordinary life, that dimension of consciousness already is arising. And you may not even know it.

It seems strange that you cannot, you may not even know it. The mind, to the mind, it's totally insignificant. It's nothing, that, so it doesn't, it will immediately deny it.

The mind means thoughts. A strange thing happened when a shift of consciousness happened to this person, what looks like a person, a shift of consciousness happened, and I walked around this city, which happened to be London, after being totally burdened by an endless obsessive stream of problematic thinking, mostly concerned with me, suddenly there was freedom from that. And I walked around the city, just looking at everything, and feeling very peaceful.

Blissful. Such deep peace. And only a year later, I'm saying this because I just said you might not even notice that this is arising in you, only a year later, all I knew is deep peace.

Why? I didn't know. It was wonderful, but I didn't know why.

I saw a Zen master, and he just said a little thing about Zen is simply stop thinking. The ending of thought is no thought, that's it. Oh, no thought.

And then I realized that I actually had had not much thought since then, since it happened. That's where the peace came from. But I didn't even know that thought had come to an end.

Not completely. When it was needed, it was there. So in many of you, moments of pure awareness, another way of putting it, are there.

And you may not even know it. But now you can be more aware of that process, that shift accelerates and deepens as you become aware of it. And this is very subtle.

We'll go into the subtleties of that shift during this retreat, how it is connected with sense perceptions, and so on. We'll also, during this retreat, spend some time in silence. I'll let you know.

I highly recommend it for certain periods of time here. Whatever thought comes into your head, don't take it too seriously. Because even thinking then exists within that

spaciousness.

There's another silly thought. Oh, and another one, and another. And then you'll notice thoughts that you've had for years.

Same thing. Okay. It's fine.

And the thought says, yes, but this, this is how it is. It's not how it is. It's a thought about it.

And we realize that all thought is limited, relative. A little perspective, one of many, many possible perspectives on anything, any situation, any human being, yourself, tiny perspective. And then another perspective is also true.

And another one is also be true. So you don't totally believe that any one thought can hold the entire truth about any situation or person. It can't.

So thought becomes, you have a spacious relationship to thought. So when the thought comes into your head, what a creep this guy is, then you don't totally believe in it anymore. Perhaps that is one perspective, but every human being contains the possibilities that are inherent in the whole of humanity.

The creep is also a may not, perhaps not yet manifested. It's there. So you don't totally believe in that anymore.

It's one perspective on this human being. And when you go to sleep tonight, go to sleep. There's no television here.

So I don't need to say, don't watch television. Don't even read a book, let alone the paper that you brought. Let's just see how the stock market is doing.

Just go to, when you are in bed, lie, take attention away from the stream of thinking, place it into the body. There's a space of the inner body. Be aware of that.

Sense that. At first sight, that might appear an object that arises in your consciousness, but it's actually deeper than that. You can go through that doorway into space consciousness.

The aliveness that you sense in the inner body, and you go to sleep from there, not from thinking. And if you wake up in the middle of the night, some silly thought may come into your head. What am I doing here?

So much stuff at home that I should be dealing with. This isn't getting me anywhere. Thoughts, recognize it as thought.

So the thought is within spaciousness. And then sense, feel the inner body. And you

don't take thoughts that seriously.

Now, I will officially open this retreat with a ceremony, minimum ceremony. Thank you. You may just want to sit for just a little bit as this body moves away.

And then when you feel ready, you will find yourself getting up, moving to your room as a walking field of awareness.

[Speaker 2] (1:00:26 - 1:01:18)

This concludes session one of Entering the Now with Eckhart Tolle. Our program continues with session two. Sounds True and Namaste Publishing present Entering the Now.

Session two with Eckhart Tolle.

[Speaker 1] (1:01:38 - 2:17:05)

Somebody gave me this morning, I don't know if I put it in my pocket, a calendar leaf from today. It's by Ernest Hemingway. And if there is not any such thing as a long time, nor the rest of our lives, nor from now on, but there's only now, why then now is the thing to praise, and I'm very happy with it.

Maybe he forgot that later. It's easy to forget that there's only now. Not a personal fault of yours, if you forget.

It's the human mind. And ultimately there's nothing personal in it. It's the human mind.

And when you forget, something else takes over, obscures the aliveness, the awareness, intelligence, the joy that is inherent in now and in life, which are one. Then your life situation becomes more important than now. Assumes an importance that ultimately it doesn't really have.

And the life situation exists within the polarities of high, low, good, bad. And its characteristic is also that it's incomplete. Something needs to happen before I can be myself, is the belief.

And when you suffer, that's a good indication that you've lost the now, so to speak. You can't really lose it, but it can be lost to you. It's still there.

You don't know it. And the deep meaning of now is one with what we sometimes call presence, or we sometimes call space consciousness. Because the now is deeper than what happens in it.

And the now is not separate from who you are. The one factor that remains the same throughout your life, it's now. And so the ability is there in you now to step out of the

stream of mind.

That's your life situation, what I sometimes call object consciousness, the story, the narrative, which is problematic. There's probably not a single person in this room whose life situation is not to some extent problematic. And if isn't problematic today, wait until next week.

You may have a little interlude of not, life is leaving me alone for a moment. And that is fine. It's in the nature of phenomenal reality to be like that.

Atoms coming together, colliding, coming apart, the dance of form. It's only problematic from a personal sense of self, from the perspective of a personal sense of self. And your whole personal sense of self is bound up with problems and things to be worked out.

Need to think about this. It's so easy, as it probably happened to Hemingway, to see the truth, to have limited access, perhaps, to the dimension of space consciousness. Hemingway was a creative writer.

So within that field, he had access to that, and he had insights. And then it's easy to lose that, and your entire attention becomes absorbed again by object consciousness, the story. So here, presence arises from within you.

It's being pulled out of you as you sit there. It responds to something that it recognizes here, which is itself. That essential consciousness where we are all one, the unconditioned recognizes itself.

And that feels good. It likes that. It comes forward.

And you're now able to step out of the stream of mind in your everyday life, the moment you notice that suffering or unhappiness have taken over, or fear or stress. They're all forms of suffering. That little ability to step back into that space of now, that space of now, the moment you notice you've gone away, and that you will go.

Of course, you will go astray sometimes for a few hours. You could even go away for a few days. Unlikely, though, anymore.

It could happen. And it's always waking up the qualitative difference of being present compared to being immersed in compulsive thinking is enormous. It is like waking up out of a dream.

That's the dream of thought. And that is a wonderful thing to discover that possibility in your life, to step out of that dream and awaken. Perhaps, probably now, without the need for some challenge, because that can be very helpful, too, to wake you up when you've been drifting along and suddenly something happens.

Life presents you with a big challenge. Space consciousness is back as the alert, aware

field of presence. And that is the determining factor in any human relationship, whether space consciousness is still present, whether there is space in the relationship, whether there is space in you in the relationship, or whether you are absorbed totally in object consciousness.

And that's any kind of relationship. The question is, are you there as space? Is there a depth, a space from where you relate?

It begins with the ability to listen to the other person. That is very closely related to being present, to listen in that alertness, no matter what words are coming out of the other person's mouth. And whether it's in business relationship, or whether it is in your personal relationship, or whether it's in a relationship that is very fleeting, very short encounters in an elevator, maybe just a few words are spoken in a shop, in a restaurant with a waiter.

And it all comes down to a moment of no thought, just alert, spacious presence with your partner, listening to him or her, somebody who comes to you with, in an agitated state, totally absorbed by some life situation. Ah, ah, ah, this just happened, you can't... And the world will draw you in, want to draw you in to complete identification again with things.

You remember we mentioned the word things, meaning not just physical things, but including physical things. Some people's attention is totally into physical things. Their belongings, their house, their car, their dog, their...

That pull is very strong, and that's the challenge. The world wants to, and the world is ultimately the human mind, becomes externalized as the world out there, wants to draw you back into total identification with object consciousness, objects. This matters.

This matters. This is so important. And I'm always amazed what kind of things people make important in their lives, how ultimately insignificant the things are that they make important, more important than their state of consciousness.

They're more important than peace, more important. The tiniest things can assume an importance, that you give the power away to things. You give them the power to make you unhappy.

And what kind of things people give that power to is just amazing. Ephemeral, fleeting things and situations that are here one day, gone the next. Things that would pop even if you discovered you had a serious illness, or you have an accident, which sometimes can be a great awakening.

Things that would pop like a soap bubble, and their unimportance would be revealed if somebody told you you have a serious illness, and you had to be concerned with all that. Suddenly it has no significance whatsoever. The heavy problems that you had been

carrying around dissolved at once.

This is why for some people a serious illness is the great awakening, out of total immersion in object consciousness. There is no guarantee that the illness will awaken you, because it could add a further heavy object to your mind. The concept of me being seriously ill, which would add a further heavy thought form to identify with to your mind, that is possible too.

But potentially an illness has the ability to awaken you, and to reveal to you that which is at best relatively important. And the truth is, anything in this world of form, of things, is relatively important. And your career, your possessions, your relationships, what you have achieved or not achieved, what you know or you don't know, things that people derive their self sense of self from, all relatively important.

Yes, it's relatively important whether I live in the street, sleep on park benches, or I have a nice home. Yes, it makes a difference in the realm of relativity. But you can be awake on the park bench, as you can be awake in a nice home.

And some people awakened precisely there, after losing things, things to identify with. So only, there's only one thing that matters absolutely in one's life. Then the rest of your life is recognized as relative.

It's not that you ignore it, but you recognize that the importance is only relative. And the one thing that matters, and Jesus used those words too, there's only one thing that matters. He said to Martha, in the story of Mary and Martha, two women or two sisters, he's visiting and one is extremely busy.

This, let's get this done and that done. We have to get the meal ready. Look, he's here, he's visiting us.

He's, come and help me get the meal. This needs to be done. Peel the potatoes, do this.

And Mary wasn't doing any, she was just sitting there looking at Jesus. And Martha says, why don't you tell her to help me? And Jesus wasn't really concerned whether the, when the food would be on the table or whether it would be on the table.

He said, Mary has, there's only one thing that really matters. This is a free translation. And Mary has chosen that one thing that really matters.

Now, when you look, modern theologians, they can't, they can't tolerate that statement and they do whatever they can to reinterpret that. He didn't really mean that. Another simple way of putting it is, you forget that the only thing that really matters is your state of consciousness, nothing else.

If that's, if that's not right, nothing out there is going to be right. And you're not going to

be of much help to anybody. To see what is primary, it is, that is not selfish, far beyond it.

It's the opposite of selfish to recognize that. And then, what is so important to have the power to make me unhappy? The Course in Miracles puts it this way.

In any situation, it says, ask yourself what your purpose is in this situation. What is really my purpose in this situation? The mind will tell you, well, I need to get this and achieve that out of it.

And I need to keep, get hold of this or not lose that or get that. Often it's, I want something and the world wants something else. The source of great suffering.

I want something, but the world, in whatever form the world comes, wants something else. What is really my purpose in this situation? And the Course in Miracles puts it this way.

It's, peace is my purpose in this situation. And one of its lessons is, I could see peace instead of this. I could see peace instead of what I now see in this situation.

But how? How could I see peace in a, what looks like a conflict situation? You step back from object consciousness and you do it.

There are different ways in which you can step back from object consciousness. The moment you notice that object consciousness is creating suffering, because you've become totally drawn into it, have lost your rootedness in the unmanifested. So you're drawn into just, you're in the manifested.

How? There are little ways, and you know them, but I'm saying it again, of stepping back out of complete identification with object consciousness. And one of the ways is the yes to what is.

The inner yes to this moment. And that is, it's surprising that that is a way of stepping out of object consciousness. So you step out of object consciousness by allowing the objects that are here, manifested in this moment, to be there as they are.

And often the way in which the objects that are the manifestation of this moment, very often, the particular configuration of objects that make up the external form of this moment, may not be what your mind wanted. What your mind would have said, this is how I wanted this moment to be. More often than not, it's something else.

So, but you cannot find peace or yourself by working exclusively on that level of object consciousness and trying to rearrange the configuration of objects in my life in such a way that it all fits neatly together, and then the life picture, the life situation suddenly is complete and works beautifully. And then I can be at peace. This is the attempt that

people make when they try to, it's not, it never stays for very long.

It's not in the nature of phenomenal reality to do that. Things continuously move and are in flux. And any situation you go into, no matter how wonderful, there's another, there's always another side to it.

It's the entire, the whole phenomenal existence, they would not exist without the pull of the polarities. Hot, cold, high, low, birth, death. So there's the, there's a futile attempt to rearrange, not that you cannot honor that dimension of your life and do the best you can on the level of things.

Yes, you do the best you can on the level of things, but if that's all there is, no matter how you try to do the best you can, it will never be good enough. Because you haven't left the level of object consciousness, you're only there. And so there are people who are, who try so hard, and then always, that wasn't supposed to happen.

There are people, they're wonderful people, who perhaps do, dedicate their whole lives to helping others, perhaps as social workers, or go to third world countries. It's beautiful, but, but many of them, after a few years, experience burnout. They get depleted, because there's so much suffering, and there seems to be no end to it.

And then, of course there is. Since they, they exclusively operate on the level of object consciousness, and it can happen easily, very easily, you can be drawn into that. So the key then, is finding the one, that dimension of space, that is beyond the polarities that are here in object consciousness.

Not expecting the polarities of object consciousness not to be there, or hoping that one day it'll all be fine. This can happen, it can all be fine, but not in the way that the mind thought it could be fine. It can be fine at this moment.

It is already fine at this moment, but you don't know that. All the, allowing the particular configuration of objects in your life to be as they are, even if it looks problematic, and it usually does, allowing this moment to be as it is. That allowing takes back your identification with object consciousness.

It's a stepping, allowing is a stepping back. And when you step back, a space opens up around the particular events, situation of this moment, the particular configuration of how things are at this moment. There's a space around it.

It's the stepping back. At this moment there may be a screaming human being in front of you, accusing you, you did that. The unconscious impulse is to say, how dare you say that I did that?

There's an acceptance of, suddenly there's a space around the turbulence. And that's, at first it's a very subtle thing, the space around a turbulence. And then you realize how

deep it is.

And then you could be in the middle of great external turbulence in your life, even tragic events at this moment, even in the face of death, and through inner alignment with the suchness of this moment, allowing the forms to be as they are, go beyond form, go beyond identification with form. It's through allowing forms that the deeper dimension is there. And then you're free of dependence on the world of form, as far as your inner state is concerned.

You can still experience, on a surface level, which is a wave movement, you can still experience happiness and unhappiness, but they are minor movements on the surface of your being. I compare this to lighting a candle in a dark room. The candle is lit, and then suddenly the candle is extinguished.

That makes a big difference if you sit in a dark room, whether the candle is lit or whether the candle is extinguished. But now open the shutters, the windows, and sunlight is streaming into the room from all sides. And there's the candle, and sometimes the candle is lit, and sometimes it's not lit.

Happiness, unhappiness. It's lit? Oh, nice.

It's not lit? But there's the sunlight, it's filling the room, so it doesn't matter that much, only if, in the absence of that, then your life situation matters absolutely, and it will make you happy one day, in this strange, this ecstatic happiness sometimes. It's all worked out for me, finally.

Or sometimes people, the gestures they make when they've made it, they go, oh yeah, I've made it. It's almost the ego saying, I've triumphed over the universe. Thank you, I saw it on TV.

And then a week later, they go, they don't win the match. So you're at the mercy of the wind, the wind of phenomena. And so this is a stepping back.

So the one, perhaps the easiest, the most simple thing is to remember the yes, the possibility of the yes to this moment. That takes you out of the story into now. The Course in Miracles puts it this way, you single out this instant.

You take just that, because that is ultimately your life. This is not the depth of it, it is the form it takes, is the external manifestation of your life at this moment. The depth of now is your life, is life.

You single out this instant and recognize it as timeless. And you stay with this instant only, particularly when things get heavy in your life situation. It is a signal to step back into the alertness of now, of presence, of space consciousness.

And if your life situation is very heavy, it could be, let's say you're faced with an illness which may or may not bring about an early end to your physical existence. You may be faced with that. That immediately erases all other problems that you thought you have and reveals them as fairly insignificant.

But it's possible that you still recognize that, see that as a problem, which it isn't. It can push you into intense alert presence. Only this moment exists.

One can live in such a way that the life situation never again takes you over completely. Another way is, surprisingly, bring your attention back to sense perceptions. Because sense perception can help you to connect with now.

And you will notice when you are not connected with now, you're hardly aware of your surroundings. Your entire attention is in thought processes. And then you can bring attention back to, you suddenly look around.

This isn't so bad. This moment isn't so bad. My life situation may be dreadful.

But if I single out this moment, that's not so bad. I'm sitting somewhere, breathing, and there's a wall there, another one there, and a window with baths on, and a little bit of sky. And you look around and then there's little graffiti on the walls.

And suddenly, in that alertness, there is more there than that which you see, although the perceptions brought you to it. They were the beginning. Those pain perceptions were there suddenly.

But you also realize an intense aliveness underlying your sense perceptions. An intense alertness underlying your sense perceptions. A spaciousness underlying those forms that you see, which are limited forms.

And limiting forms, limiting you perhaps. And yet it doesn't matter. When you discover the depth that is within you in any situation.

But first you need to come into now. And then now reveals its depths to you. How deep now actually is.

And if you go deep into now, there is peace there. There is even joy there. That doesn't depend on the ups and downs of object consciousness.

The joy is the sunlight that is there. The ups and downs of object consciousness are the flame of the candle. Sometimes it's lit, sometimes it's not lit.

That's how things, this is how it is. Sense perceptions. This is why we placed importance here on perceiving.

And the amazing thing is, you perceive without trying to fit the sense perceptions into

your narrative. If you're sitting in that little room with barred windows, and if you looked around, you would be relating your sense perceptions to the narrative in your mind, the story of me. This is what the world has done to me.

They have put me here. Even when I was a child, the world was unfair to me. And they treated me badly.

And now they have put me here. They did that to me. This is where I've ended up.

And all the details of my story. Every sense perception would, you would try to fit into the story of me. It's an unhappy story in that case, and in many other cases.

It's an unhappy story. And even if it's a happy story, you're sitting in a limo, a chauffeur-driven limo. It's picked you up from the airport.

And you can tell yourself a story there too. And that looks like a happy story. You see the drinks there that are arranged.

You can take any bottle. You can, air-conditioned, everything is. And you say, I made it.

You have another story. And again, stories have the tendency of being satisfying for a while, and then changing, or no longer working to satisfy you. The next time you could be sitting in the limo, feeling how empty that is, to be sitting.

It's no longer fulfilling to my story. After a while, it's normal, and you need something else. And this isn't doing it anymore.

Or you might even do the opposite. Why am I sitting in this limo when everybody else is so poor? I shouldn't be here.

Again, some new story develops, and you suddenly feel guilty about sitting in this limo. Another story, they change. Let's go back to the man sitting in a little room with barred windows, who is then attempting to fit the sense perceptions into the story.

And that's, of course, not presence. It's to stay with the perceptions without the story in that alertness. There's just this.

And it's enough. Without the projection of your personal self onto them. Because when you project, you have a personal and unhappy relationship with the present cell that you're sitting in.

If you have a personal relationship with the present cell, it's a very unhappy place. Or whatever place. But if you can take the story out of this moment and just be with the simplicity of this moment, even the wall of the present cell has an aliveness and a beauty to it.

And you see it directly without needing thought processes to convince yourself that it has an aliveness and a beauty to it. You see it directly. And people have gone through that transformation in present cells.

I'm using that as an example of what would usually be called an extremely undesirable life situation. But you can take any situation. Are you completely in the story as you're going from A to B?

Or are you present to your sense perceptions? And by being present to your sense perceptions, the sense perceptions too, auditory, visual, become a portal into something that is deeper than the perceptions. When the alertness arises towards sense perception, then that alertness reveals itself as very deep.

And that takes you out of the story, which has a past and a future. Heavy past and future. So you discover the beauty of living to a large extent, if not a hundred percent.

If you only live fifty percent free of the story, or less. Fifty percent of your life, thirty percent. You live while you go from here to there, while you sit at home, while you wait for something to happen.

Stepping out of the story and just be with this moment. And discover the depths of this moment, the aliveness of this moment, both within and without, and the beauty of this moment. This could happen while you're seriously ill and might be waiting in a hospital room for treatment, and you become totally and utterly present.

And there's a little potted plant with leaves, intensely alive. Which you see when you don't bring in mental labels. Which you see without the personal relationship, just that.

And in that alertness, there is also a stillness. When the story isn't running through your mind, that dimension that is space and stillness is suddenly there. That frees you from you as the story-based sense of self.

So you can step out of it by using, one could say, various exit points. It's a good thing that within your life situation, the dream that is ultimately your life situation, as Shakespeare said, we are such stuff as dreams are made of. Here one day, on the next fleeting events.

Within the dream of your life situation, if you look here and there, you find little doors, they'd say exit. And you are more likely to look for them when you get unhappy within your life situation than when you're happy. But that changes quickly anyway.

The unhappiness comes after an interlude of happiness. Suddenly the candle isn't lit anymore. And then you start looking, you can start looking for the exit signs.

Wouldn't that be wonderful in a nightmare, if you remember that in that nightmare, all

you have to do is look for the little luminous sign that says exit. And you find one sign is the exit that says sense perception exit. Another sign is the exit written underneath, it says yes.

And then another sign, there's an exit where it says inner body. You can take any. And if you go, it doesn't matter which exit you go through, you end up in the same place.

Another exit that's not yet available for everybody, but for some, for some of you that is already there, for some it's not yet there, but that's okay. That exit says stop thinking. Just that.

Stop thinking. When you discover that, but you discover it through, first you use the other exits. But then you discover within yourself you can actually choose to simply be present with what is, without the interference of thought.

You choose presence. You choose to not think. The whole dream has come to a stop.

And the strange thing is, no matter what exit you use, through it you access that which is beyond the phenomenal. And miraculously, it influences the fact that you are rooted in the unmanifested with one foot in it, miraculously influences the way in which the manifested unfolds for you. That means to say, the way in which what you call your reality, your life, your world, the way in which you experience life on an external level, changes, is influenced strongly by the fact that you are rooted in the depths of your being, in the spaciousness of presence and the stillness of presence.

That does something. It's not that the two realms are totally separate. They are not.

Something from the unmanifested flows, and this may sound paradoxical, but that's how it is. It's when we use language it begins to sound paradoxical. Something from the unmanifested flows into the world of manifestation and makes it more benevolent.

The way in which it unfolds has a benevolence, it is more benign. Yes, there are still polarities, but what is lost is the harshness and the violence that otherwise is inherent in the polarities. And so, the phenomenal then unfolds with more gentleness, and yes, this is the only way in which what that really means.

Love flows from that dimension into the world of form, because love is never derived from anything in the world of form. It doesn't come out of form. It comes from the formless.

And so, that's the only way in which love can come into your true love. And that true love is to look upon anything without thought is the flow of love. The yes to what is, is love.

Byron Katie, a spiritual teacher, has a book out. It's called Loving What Is. A yes to what is.

But the love, people are looking for love or try to be loving, never having gone beyond object consciousness. And they have an object in their mind, which is a me, which says, I need to be more loving. And they try hard.

It doesn't work. I've tried so hard to love, but he let me down. Now, letting down is an interesting expression.

And it can be applied to anything in the world of object consciousness. Belief system, for a while it's great. It's your support in life.

It's all, I believe, this is how it is. And suddenly something happens and you can't explain anymore why this should happen to you, because you believed all the right things. Thought structures let you down in the end.

Things let you down because they don't give you the satisfaction that you thought they would give you for a while, and then they let you down. Situations that you go into that were great, one moment great, and then it let me down. I became a CEO and then you get so stressed that you need hospital treatment.

The situation let you down. You were looking for something better in it. And people, he let me down, she let me down, everything.

It's in the nature of things to let you down. Because letting you down means you had an expectation that they can't fulfill in the world of form. You wanted something from the world of form that is only in the formless.

You wanted something through future in the world of form, which is already here now. Places too. You can look at the most ideal place and then you buy some land there and you build a house there, and at first it feels great.

And then as you sit in that house, it wears off after a while. The beautiful view from the window is still beautiful, but it wears off. It's not that fulfilling inside after a while, if you operate within object consciousness.

So even the most beautiful place will have certain drawbacks also that you only discover when you move there. Now this does not happen if you stay with what is, because there's a freshness to every moment. But it happens when you are immersed in a story-based sense of self.

So it's stepping out of that. Use the exit. If you can, some of you can, the exit I just mentioned.

Stop thinking is one that is available to some of you already. Presence arises with such intensity that thought doesn't come in anymore except a few little fragments here and there. So I've probably mentioned to you before, somebody asked me once what my

main achievement in life was.

I hadn't written the book yet, so there was nothing much for many years on an external level. And so I said, I don't need to think anymore. That's enough.

The compulsion to think is gone. That's all. Now the world doesn't value that too much.

But that's okay. If I went to an enlightened employer and said that, I would, he or she would give me the job. Because they would know how well you function in that state where you don't have to think.

Can think, don't have to. And then a greater intelligence operates. That is the intelligence that is deeper or higher, whatever perspective you want to use, than thinking.

Not separate from it. Thinking is an aspect of universal intelligence that operates through humans. One could say that the intelligence that operates throughout the universe, when it gets filtered through the brain or focused through the brain, becomes thought.

One way of putting it. So in humans there's a tendency of that intelligence to become expressed as thought. But humans also have the ability to transcend thought.

And that's an evolutionary transition. If not to say leap for humanity. Humanity has been thought-based probably for a million years.

And now that cycle is coming to an end because it's becoming self-destructive. All cycles come to an end. It's an evolutionary cycle.

Our gathering is part of that evolutionary impulse that is now in many humans to go beyond that limited consciousness that is identification with mind as a me. That limited sense of self. And that evolutionary impulse is in many human beings.

And there are many who don't allow that yet because the old structures are still very dense. So there is an enormous push, one could almost say, within them towards transformation. And yet there's a refusal to let go of the old structures, which is the old structures themselves hanging in there.

And so then it often is the case that humans need to experience some disaster so that the structures break open. That's the grace of disaster. If it breaks open, heavy mind structures, the shell is cracked open.

So there's grace. Look at it from a deeper level. There is grace in every disaster.

From a limited point of view, you can't see that. That's the beauty of it. Divine grace is there also.

And those who are open to that evolutionary impulse, as you are, don't really need the disaster anymore. That's good. Or you may need a final little disaster as the final push out of identification with mind.

Maybe a little disaster will be enough. A beautiful saying of Jesus, take no thought for the morrow. It's the old translation.

For the morrow will take thought for the things of itself. No thought. That's the old translation.

The modern translation says, don't be anxious about tomorrow. The really one, no thought is better, because to be anxious and to be thinking are very closely related. The entire teaching of Buddhism, the entire teaching of Zen, what they call the state of emptiness, what the scholars think about, what did he mean by emptiness, and what the scholars call a nihilistic, life-denying teaching, what the scholars call an atheistic teaching, they're looking at that from the point of view of thought and totally misperceiving the emptiness of Buddhism is simply this clear state of pure awareness of no thought. Just this unconditioned consciousness.

What is there to think about, to understand it? You can't understand no thought, and now you become intelligent. True intelligence is there.

And then thought may come in occasionally to translate something into words. It comes from that level of no thought, realization, and you're connected with the totality through that. The separation goes, the screen of mind, of conceptualization, the conceptualized sense of self, the me, goes.

And then you don't manufacture a conceptualized sense of self for the people in your life that you meet. That's the most dreadful thing that happens in relationships, that happens through mind, that you manufacture for other human beings as you have done for yourself. You manufacture a conceptualized sense of self consisting of objects in consciousness, thought, movement, judgments, views, opinions, and you fix the human being as you fixed yourself into a little story.

And then you fix the other. And that's what humans do to each other. And when you fix the other, all you see is what comes back at you from the other human being is confirmation that your conceptual identity that you imposed is correct, because now all you can see is evidence for your projection.

And this also applies for people who have a strong conceptual worldview, as most have. This is how the world is. This is how humans are.

Some people have manufactured a conceptual identity for humanity, and they might say that they are all greedy and deceiving. That is how humans are. Some people have that view.

Maybe as children they were deceived by their parents, who knows what happened to them, and they developed concepts of how things are. And that filters out everything else that doesn't agree with the concepts. All you meet then are greedy and deceiving human beings, because all you have is your concept.

A loving human being you wouldn't be able to see, because you see reality through the screen of conceptualization. And that screens out a lot. It doesn't fit into that screen.

And this is what humans are trapped in. That's the human condition. That's what the Middle East is trapped in.

That's whatever they are fighting, tribal warfares and religious wars. A totally conceptualized identity for themselves and others. Trapped in thought.

Completely trapped in thought. And so you can do anything to another human being, because you've already reduced that human being to a lifeless concept. If you can impose the concept non-believer, let's say you are Christians used to do it, now Muslims tend to do it, some of them, not all, a few.

Non-believer is enough of a concept to reduce that human being to a lifeless mind object. And then killing a non-believer is totally justified, because it's not a human being, it's a non-believer. It's a concept.

And Christians used to do it. You don't believe exactly what we believe? Okay, we're going to kill you.

Such is the human condition. And if you don't kill them physically anymore, you kill them in different ways. You have already killed them by imposing a conceptualized identity on them to yourself.

That is the primordial act of violence. And other kinds of violence come out of that. And it is the human condition.

And we are going beyond it, we are coming to the end of that. You can see how closely it is all related to thought, and to knowing nothing beyond thought. It is the end of the dimension of thought, to be trapped in that.

Humanity is coming to the end of that. And if it doesn't happen soon enough, they'll be gone. It was a little experiment in consciousness.

Fine. It worked while it worked. And then consciousness moves through other channels.

It has, you know how vast the universe is. Any channel, it will flower through. Who knows?

Other life forms, other planets. But there's a good chance that humans will make it,

because we are here. That's a good sign.

Another good sign is that vast numbers of people seem to be interested and drawn to and open to the power of now. I'm using that in a wider sense. I'm not just speaking of the book, but the power of now as the new consciousness.

They are drawn to that. And it's happening more quickly than I could ever have realized. So there were places on the planet where already the new consciousness manifested, they came up as a wave, and then subsided.

And then there came another wave of the new consciousness arising. And sometimes there were, within one century, many people in different traditions bringing in something new. There is a readiness.

It's been there once. It leaves something behind. It's everywhere on the planet now, that openness.

So that's good. But what really matters is you. You cannot try to be free of thought.

That would bring in thought. But you could say, let's see if I can allow myself to be free of thought. There's no trying.

Can I allow? Or maybe not yet. That's okay.

Between this tree and that tree, there's a space of just walking. And it's maybe a few steps, but you don't count the steps because there's only one step. So between the two trees, that physical space has become inner space of no thought.

You're looking at that tree and walking. And then there's another tree, a space of, as you're walking between the two trees, a space of no thought. It's beautiful.

Every time that happens, there is a burning up in you of past, of past mind structures, of accumulations of past, even of past pain. Because in presence, which is the state of presence, the past becomes burned up in you, the accumulated past in you. And so the accumulated past in you in the East is called karma, the unconscious identifications and deriving a sense of self from them.

And it's becoming burned up even more strongly as we sit here, being consumed in the fire of presence. And that's a wonderful thing. There are a few people who are not yet ready for it.

And it sometimes happens that somebody runs away from a retreat. I'm not quite ready yet to be burned up. I want to keep the past.

I'm not saying, of course, that you're losing your memories. That's not it. But past as the conditioning, identification with the conditioning of your mind, the conditioning has less

intensity to it.

Still conditioning, still the same conditioning, but it begins to fade out like a photo after a few years, fades out gradually. Any of the exits, of course, takes you to no thought. You can go there directly.

No thought can be considered as an exit in itself. But any exit takes you there. The yes to what is, is the end of compulsive thinking.

Because compulsive thinking is a denial and a resistance to what is. The inner body takes you out of mind, out of thought. Acute awareness of sense perceptions takes you out of thought.

They all do that. And then a time comes when you go there just directly. The final thing that some of you may know, you told Ramana Maharshi, the great sage who lived in the first half of the 20th century, a great teacher.

Somebody asked him, how can we know whether we are making any progress on the spiritual path? We don't know if we're making progress. And he said, oh, that's easy.

The degree of absence of thought is the measure of progress on your spiritual path. Oh, that doesn't give you much to think about. Could there be a next question after that?

Huh.

[Speaker 2] (2:17:08 - 2:19:59)

This concludes Entering the Now with Eckhart Tolle. Music by Stephen McNamara. Entering the Now is published in collaboration with Namaste Publishing.

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